

Indiana to pardon President Harrison

■ Appointing a deputy to fill state post while he served in war was his alleged offense.

By David Mannweiler

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President Benjamin Harrison will receive a pardon from the Indiana Supreme Court in the Statehouse Rotunda on Tuesday for an alleged misdeed committed more than 100 years ago.

The pardon from Chief Justice Randall T. Shepard will be part of Benjamin Harrison Day activities, which begin at 9:30 a.m. in the rotunda.

Indianapolis attorney Henry Ryder will portray James Whitcomb Riley, reading a poem he wrote about Harrison for the dedication of the Soldiers & Sailors Monument and selections from "Little Orphant Annie."

'Harrison' will attend

Ed Myers will portray Harrison and address the public and students from Adams Elementary School in Franklin Township.



Chief Justice Randall T. Shepard (top) will pardon Benjamin Harrison, who left his post as Indiana Supreme Court reporter to serve in the military during the Civil War.



Democrat Michael Kerr won the election but could not get access to the court records. He sued the Supreme Court clerk, John Jones, for turning over the records to Craven without authorization.

In 1860, Harrison was elected reporter of the Indiana Supreme Court, beginning his four-year term in 1861.

When Gov. Oliver P. Morton commissioned him a colonel in the 70th Indiana Regiment in August 1862, Harrison appointed his deputy, William Craven, to take over his Supreme Court duties.

In the fall election of 1862, Democrats, saying Harrison had abandoned his office, ran a candidate to replace him.

The Republicans disputed those claims and ran no one for the office.

Party-line decision

The suit went to the Indiana Supreme Court. There, the Democratic majority found that Harrison had, in essence, resigned as court reporter when he accepted the military position (the state constitution forbids a state employee from simultaneously holding two lucrative state offices). Republicans argued that Harrison was serving in the militia, which exempted him from the dual-job category.

Shepard's pardon will reappoint Harrison as reporter of the Supreme Court, in absentia, and excuse him for leaving the office to serve his country.

The framed pardon will be given to Myers, who will donate it to the President Benjamin Harrison Home, 1230 N. Delaware St., now a museum.

Background on the affair can be found at www.IN.gov/judiciary/education.

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